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ABSTRACT

In an effort to counteract negative feelings toward the police on the part of inner-city children, this project sponsored field trips to police stations for elementary school children in Philadelphia. Improved relations between the police and the community, increased knowledge of the policeman's role, and familiarity with vocational opportunities within the police department were the objectives of this project. Sixty grade 6 students were randomly selected from two South Philadelphia elementary schools. The measuring instruments, administered before and after the trips, consisted of a semantic differential designed to identify attitudes toward the police and two response sheets upon which students listed police functions and vocational opportunities of which they were aware. Because of positive attitudes toward police indicated on both pre-and post-testing, no significant change in attitudes could be attributed to the project. However, participants' knowledge of police roles and career opportunities was significantly greater than that of non-participants. (KG)

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THE POLICE PARTNERS PROJECT

A DESCRIPTIVE EVALUATION

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THE POLICE PARTNERS PROJECT - A DESCRIPTIVE EVALUATION

Rationale

Statement of the Problem

In an effort to counteract negative feelings toward the police on the part of inner-city youngsters, the Police Department and the Board of Education initiated the Police Partners Project. Youngsters were given the opportunity to look into the mechanics of the Department, observe its technology, and meet the men in its employ by taking bi-monthly trips to various police installations where discussions were held with the police officers on assignment.

Similar programs have yielded varying degrees of success in Chicago, Honolulu, Lansing (Nations' Schools, 1968), Kansas City (Wassen and Adelman, 1967), and Snug Harbor (Malvesta and Renayne, 1967). Milander and Egleston (1967) suggested the use of policemen as community resource people. These studies indicate that positive attitudes toward the police can be developed and negative attitudes, when present, can be reduced. However, cooperation between the schools and the police is necessary if these goals are to be achieved and sustained.

The Police Partners Project is an effort to inaugurate a continuous program for the improvement of the police image in inner-city children. More specifically, would students who participated in a program designed to positively present the police through visits to police facilities and discussions with police officers experience (1) a reduction in negative feelings toward the police; furthermore, would they be able to (2) demonstrate more knowledge of the policeman's various activities, and (3) be able to list more vocational opportunities within the Police Department than non-participating students?

Purpose of the Study

Those projects designed to introduce the policeman to elementary school students as someone other than an enforcer of the law have been mentioned above. They have attained some success but generalization of the findings is not possible because experimental research methods were not used. The present study was designed to obtain information regarding the attitudes of Philadelphia school children toward the police, their knowledge of the policeman's role, and their familiarity with vocational opportunities within the Police Department. The method used was one which would permit generalization of the results to other Philadelphia schools as well as those in other urban areas.

Behavioral Objectives

.To improve student attitude toward the police as measured by a semantic differential composed of four concepts each including eight evaluative scales.

.To increase student knowledge of the policeman's role as measured by the students listing the activities a policeman is expected to be able to perform.

.To increase student knowledge of vocational opportunities in the law enforcement field as measured by the students listing those opportunities in police work of which they are cognizant.

Procedures

Program Description

The Francis Read School was selected for the pilot study. Trips were taken to a number of police facilities, including such diverse units as the Police Academy, the Police Administration Building, and the Marine Unit. The children also participated in small group discussions with police officers. The subjects of the discussion included personal and technical aspects of police work and the

materials which the children had examined on their trips.

Lieutenant Alex Morrison of the Police Department's Community Relations Division and Mr. Bernard Auerbach, Francis Read's principal, cooperated on the details and mechanics of the program. They planned the trips, handled the necessary communications, and made arrangements for supplies. The specific activities at the agencies visited were arranged by Lt. Morrison, while Mr. Auerbach, who accompanied the students on most of the trips, was responsible for the activities at the school.

Evaluation

Sample. Thirty students were randomly selected from the school's two sixth-grade classes. For comparison purposes, 30 sixth-grade students were randomly selected from the neighboring Southwark School. The two schools, located in South Philadelphia, received bused youngsters from other areas, and both bused and non-bused children were included in the study. Funds for the project were provided by the Sears Roebuck Foundation.

Instruments Used. Prior to the commencement of the program and at its termination, the children were asked to respond to three measuring instruments; (1) a semantic differential designed to measure attitudes toward the police, (2) a response sheet upon which the students listed the police functions of which they were aware, and (3) a second response sheet upon which they listed the vocational opportunities within the Police Department of which they were aware. All the instruments were locally constructed.

Results

The results show that parts of the program were successful. At its termination, the participants listed significantly more police functions and vocations than the non-participants. Both groups expressed strong positive attitudes

toward the police on the pre and posttests.

Attitudes

The semantic differential was composed of four concepts each including eight scales. The concepts were: (1) School, (2) My Class, (3) Policeman, and (4) Parents. The bi-polar adjective, evaluative scales were: (1) Good-Bad, (2) Kind-Cruel, (3) Grateful-Ungrateful, (4) Clean-Dirty, (5) Graceful-Awkward, (6) High-Low, (7) Important-Unimportant, and (8) Wise-Foolish. The scales were scored from one to five - low to high - and averaged over each concept. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Semantic Differential: Pre-Post Average Concept Scores and Changes Experimental and Control Groups

Concept	Experimental (Read) Pre(N=27)	Post(N=23)	p	Control (Southwark) Pre(N=28)	Post(N=29)	p
School	4.44	4.30	NS	4.18	3.80	NS
My Class	4.43	4.00	NS	3.84	4.21	NS
Policeman	4.82	4.62	NS	4.41	4.23	NS
Parents	4.95	4.90	NS	4.63	4.75	NS

Because of the initial high ranking given by both groups on the semantic differential toward all four concepts, it was difficult to observe any significant changes in the students' attitudes toward the police. The slight changes which did occur between pre and post testing are well within the range of the expected test-retest variation.

Police Functions

For purposes of this study, police functions were categorized into seven broad areas which were suggested by the pretest. This technique was used in order to simplify the statistical analysis. The areas were (1) Law Enforcement, (2) Crime Prevention, (3) Medical, (4) Assistance, (5) Investigation, (6) Administrative, and (7) Traffic. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Average Number of Police Functions Named:

Experimental and Control Groups - Pre and Post

	Experimental		Control		t	p
Pre	2.48	N=27	1.86	N=28		
Post	6.04	N=23	1.86	N=29		
Difference	+3.56		0.00		2.51	.001

The hypothesis tested by this component was to determine whether this program would increase the students knowledge of police functions. A control group was used to discriminate between those knowledges presented in the program and those which students would learn through experiences they had during the year. The data demonstrate that the experimental group gained significantly more knowledge about police functions than the control group.

Vocational Opportunities within the Police Department

The vocational opportunities listed in the Civil Service Register were used as a criterion measure for this objective. Although the respondents were not always able to use the identical name listed in the Register, credit was awarded if similar names were given. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Average Number of Vocational Opportunities Named:
Experimental and Control Groups - Pre and Post

	Experimental	Control	t	p
Pre	1.59	.66		
Post	5.74	1.28		
Difference	+4.15	+ .62	16.0	.001

Here, the Read children showed significantly greater knowledge about vocational opportunities in police work than the Southwark children. These results indicate that a program such as the Police Partners venture can broaden an inner city child's knowledge of vocational opportunities in the Police Department.

Conclusions

The Police Partners Project Program has demonstrated that a program can be developed which will significantly broaden knowledges that elementary students have about policemen and police functions. Observations of the various activities of the program indicate that future replications of this activity should consider a shortened version of the project which could then be made available to larger numbers of students within the same time span. During the past year, several trips offered duplicative experiences for the students. For this reason, a shorter

more intensive program might attain the same results while allowing more students to take advantage of the offering. If time proves to be a factor, only those trips which offer unique experiences should be included. This program reduction could give other groups an opportunity to participate. Better coordination of activities should be made to optimize use of lag time during excursions.

As indicated previously a new attitudinal test should be used which would contain a number of concepts which describe duties, functions, and needs related to law enforcement rather than the unitary concept "policeman." The non-significant difference in attitude on the part of the experimental and control students was probably a function of the initial high scores of both groups on the pretest. The fact that such positive attitudes were found is an indication that efforts to show the policeman as a friend on the part of both the schools and the police department have been more successful than previously thought. It is also possible, however, that changes in attitude were not detected by the measuring instrument because of a lack of sensitivity in the test itself. Future studies of this problem will attempt to determine the validity of these findings by correlating data from interviews and observations of students in structured situations with test scores.

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